



consumer news

Office of Consumer Affairs
Executive Office of the President · Virginia H. Knauer, Director

857-I-1

Vol. 1 No. 1, April 1971

SAMPLE
SEL-5/71

President speaks for consumers

Reaffirming his commitment to American consumers, President Nixon sent Congress his second consumer message on Feb. 24. He proposed legislation to give greater protection to the consumer and the responsible businessman.

One of the President's major recommendations was his proposed Consumer Product Safety Act, which would give the Secretary of Health, Education & Welfare authority to:

- Collect and analyze data on injuries related to consumer products;
- Set mandatory safety standards on consumer products when needed;
- Ban products posing unwarranted risk of injury;
- Regulate sale of certain hazardous products;
- Provide for civil and criminal penalties for violations of the act.

The message also included proposed legislation for a Consumer Fraud Prevention Act, which would "prohibit a broad but clearly defined range of practices which are unfair and deceptive to consumers" (such as bait-and-switch advertising) and provide for class-action suits after successful termination of Federal Government suits. Other proposed laws—Fair Warranty Disclosure Act of 1971 and Consumer Products Test Method Act—also would protect consumers in the marketplace.

Dear Consumer:

This is the first issue of CONSUMER NEWS, the first interagency newsletter of its kind to be published by the Federal Government.

Its purpose is to keep you informed about what the Federal departments and agencies are doing for the consumer—to bring to you, in one publication, a brief account of latest government programs to benefit the consumer and to keep you up to date on plans for the future.

My own office is expanding its coordinating role in the Federal Government's consumer activities as a result of Executive Order 11583 signed by President Nixon on Feb. 24, 1971. The order replaced the old President's Committee on Consumer Interests with the Office of Consumer Affairs. I shall serve as Director of OCA as well as continuing my role as Special Assistant to the President for Consumer Affairs.

OCA continues the work of the former committee and has some new functions which include conducting regional meetings with consumers and local and state officials and conducting investigations, conferences and surveys on the problems of consumers.

With so much going on in so many Federal offices, it is virtually impossible for the public to keep up to date. We hope CONSUMER NEWS will help to keep you informed, for consumers have a right to know.

Sincerely,

Virginia Knauer

Bargain carpets may be fire hazard

Shoppers should be cautious in buying rugs and carpets advertised as bargains during spring and summer inventory-clearance sales. The dollars saved may not compensate for buying a carpet that fails to meet **Commerce Dept.**'s new flammability standard.

On April 15, it became illegal to manufacture carpets larger than 24 square feet (or hall and stair carpets longer than 6 feet) that are not flame resistant. Manufacturers' compliance with the standard does not guarantee carpet will not burn; the standard is intended only to eliminate carpets that can be ignited by small flames, such as matches, cigarettes or fireplace sparks.

After Dec. 8, rugs less than 24 square feet (or runners less than 6 feet) must have a label stating that they do not pass Federal tests for flammability and, therefore, may be hazardous. Because of smaller size and general nature of use, these rugs were exempt from the specific flame-resistant standard.

Until all old inventories are off the market—and there is no estimate about how long that will take—consumers may not know what kind of carpet they are buying unless they ask for and receive a written certification by the manufacturer that the carpet complies with the flammability standard, which is numbered DOC FF1-70. The standard requiring labels for flammable small rugs is DOC FF2-70.

Of consumer concern: lenses, pottery, noise

Food & Drug Administration's proposed rule requiring all eyeglass lenses to be impact resistant, or shatter proof, is not scheduled to become effective until Dec. 31, 1971, but such lenses are already available upon request and usually for a higher price.

FDA warnings over the past year about possible poisonous lead glazes in some pottery and china have concerned consumers, but unfortunately there is no household method for determining lead content of glazes in plates, cups or bowls; there is a way of determining whether items purchased within the last year or so are on Federal lists of approved or detained pottery shipments. Send markings or other data from bottom of dishes along with place and approximate date of purchase to Office of International Affairs, Food & Drug Administration, 5600 Fishers Lane, Rockville, Md. 20852.

Environmental Protection Agency is getting into the problem of noise pollution by establishing an Office for Noise Abatement to study levels of noise tolerance and the effect on life and property.

Army research to aid shoppers

Some of Uncle Sam's buying expertise will be passed along to consumers in July. Consumer-product fact sheets are being prepared by **U.S. Army Natick Laboratories** which is translating some of the Federal Government's purchasing specifications into plain English for the public. The fact sheets will be released by **Office of Consumer Affairs** on women's clothing, suntan preparations, dishwashing compounds, durable-press clothing, men's shoes, refrigerators, ranges and fruit juices and fruit-flavored beverages. The research will give shoppers guidelines needed in making their own value comparisons.

This is one phase of the program developed by OCA in response to President Nixon's directive to share with American consumers the Federal Government's expertise in buying for its own needs. By Executive Order 11566 last October, the President established the **Consumer Product Information Coordinating Center** (within **General Services Administration** with policy direction by OCA) to produce, develop and distribute brochures and booklets based on the government's purchasing know-how.

Institute to study buyer-seller disputes

Responding to President Nixon's request in the consumer message, Roger C. Cramton, chairman of the **Administrative Conference of the U.S.**, has asked 14 persons to join with him to study means for consumer justice. They have formed **National Institute for Consumer Justice**, a non-profit corporation funded by private foundations.

The institute will study the adequacy of present procedures for resolving disputes arising out of consumer transactions, including small-claims courts and arbitration. Particular focus will be given to increasing incentives for voluntary settlements and to recommending more effective ways of assisting consumers in obtaining rapid satisfaction of claims. The institute will forward recommendations to the President and to Congress.

Cleaning up detergents

Federal Trade Commission has provisionally accepted consent orders prohibiting manufacturers of enzyme-containing detergents (makers of Amaze, Ajax, Axion, Biz, Drive, Gain, Punch, Tide XK) and their ad agents from claiming that the products will remove all types of stains; the detergent makers have nine months to comply with the FTC orders.

At the request of FTC and **Food & Drug Administration**, the **Office of Consumer Affairs** has coordinated for the past year a review of questions raised by consumers about the safety of enzyme detergents; the review has led to a contract (financed by FDA) with **National Academy of Sciences** under which all available data on human exposure to enzymes will be studied.

Mayor to help traveling consumers

Transportation Secretary John Volpe has named Antonina P. Uccello, Mayor of Hartford, Conn., as Director of the **Transportation Dept. Office of Consumer Affairs**. Miss Uccello's responsibility will be to aid individual users of transportation in solving their problems and in communicating their complaints and requests to appropriate officers of the department. She has resigned as Mayor.

FDA warns about toy

A currently popular novelty toy is potentially hazardous, warns **Food & Drug Administration's Bureau of Product Safety**. The toy consists of two plastic balls held by a connecting cord and intended to be struck together rhythmically, top and bottom, as the cord is swung up and down. It is sold under various names descriptive of the clacking sound made when the balls hit. FDA has had reports that some balls have shattered upon impact, creating a possibility of injury from sharp, flying fragments. FDA is formulating a regulation to ban from sale those deemed hazardous.

Editor joins OCA staff

Mrs. Betty Granger Reid, former Managing Editor of *New Amsterdam News* in New York City, has joined the **Office of Consumer Affairs** as Assistant to the Director for Special Concerns. Mrs. Reid will coordinate Federal consumer programs aimed at assisting the poor, minorities and elderly, as directed by the President in his consumer message. Mrs. Reid, recipient of numerous journalistic awards, served on Governor Rockefeller's Committee on the Employment of Minority Groups in News Media and New York's Mayor Lindsay's Advisory Committee on Adoption.

Consumer Advisory Council studies issues

The President's **Consumer Advisory Council** received background reports at its March meeting on health care, insurance and marketing practices, and it reviewed the particular problems of aging and low-income consumers. Mrs. Eunice P. Howe of Boston, former Massachusetts assistant attorney general, is chairman of the 12-member council, which advises the President about consumer problems through Virginia H. Knauer, Director of OCA, who is also executive secretary of the council.

New Federal publications—some free

Unless otherwise noted, the following publications are available at **Federal Information Centers** or **Government Printing Office stores** in major cities or from Superintendent of Documents, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402 (check or money order payable to Superintendent of Documents):

Speak Up When You Buy a Car, Knock, Knock (about door-to-door sales) and *Be Sure Before You Sign* (about contracts), English and Spanish editions, published by Office of Consumer Affairs; sample copies free from OCA; available from Superintendent of Documents for 10¢ each or \$7.50 for 100 copies in English or Spanish; \$54.82 for printing negatives of all three in either language available from Assistant Superintendent for Planning, Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20401.

Suggested Guidelines for Consumer Education: Kindergarten Through 12th Grade, published by Office of Consumer Affairs; 65¢; sample copies free from OCA.

Adhesives for Everyday Use (consumer information guide), 40¢; *Fibers & Fabrics* (characteristics and shopping guide), 65¢; *Tires, Their Selection & Care*, 65¢; published by U.S. Commerce Dept.'s National Bureau of Standards.

Speak up & be heard

President Nixon said in his first consumer message to Congress that "the buyer has the right to register his dissatisfaction, and have his complaint heard and weighed, when his interests are badly served."

You have a right to do this on all consumer issues. On some issues, you may simply want to write to your Congressman or Senators. On others, you may want to get more involved. Some of the issues before Federal departments and agencies offer opportunities for submitting written comment or testifying. Because of differences in agency rules, you may want to write (or telephone if the agency has a field office in your city) for special instructions on how to submit comments or appear as a witness at a public hearing. Times, days and locations may change; confirm with the sponsoring office.

- **Detergents**

April 19 is deadline for filing comment or asking to testify on proposed **Federal Trade Commission** trade rule establishing labeling and advertising requirements for detergents—listing of all ingredients by weight and grams per use and a warning that phosphates contribute to pollution. Hearings 10 a.m. April 26–27, Room 532, FTC Building, Washington.*

- **Auto safety**

April 22 is deadline for filing comment on **Transportation Dept.**'s proposed revision on auto-safety standard for rearview mirrors to require more efficient means for seeing traffic behind car, possibly leading to rearview periscope systems.†

- **Installment sales**

May 3 is deadline for filing comment or asking to testify on proposed FTC trade regulation rule to preserve consumer claims for goods and services when making installment payments and in defending himself against suits to force him to make payments to a third party. Hearings 10 a.m. May 10–11, Room 532, FTC Building, Washington.*

- **Auto pollution**

May 4 is hearing date for U.S. and foreign car makers to report to **Environmental Protection Agency** on progress toward complying with auto-pollution control requirements of Clean Air Act of 1970; time and place to be determined. EPA's address is 1626 K St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20460.

- **Goat meat**

April 22 is deadline for filing comment on **U.S. Agriculture Dept.** proposal to allow goat meat to be labeled "mutton" or "chevon," the Spanish term for goat meat. Federal regulations now require goat meat to be labeled as such.**

- **Children's TV programs**

May 3 is deadline for filing comments on **Federal Communications Commission** inquiry and proposed rules about amount and type of children's television programs along with advertising content and methods of presenting commercials.††

* Write to Assistant Director of Industry Guidance, Bureau of Consumer Protection, Federal Trade Commission, Washington, D.C. 20580.

** Write to Hearing Clerk, U.S. Agriculture Dept., Washington, D.C. 20250.

† Write to Docket Section, National Highway Traffic Safety Administration, Room 4223, 400 7th St., S.W., Washington, D.C. 20591. Refer to Docket No. 71-3a, Notice 1. Ten copies of comments requested.

†† Write to Secretary, Federal Communications Commission, 1919 M St., N.W., Washington, D.C. 20554.

CONSUMER NEWS is published monthly by the Office of Consumer Affairs, Executive Office of the President, to report Federal Government programs for consumers. Use of funds for printing this publication approved by the Director of the Office of Management and Budget, March 31, 1971. Authorization to reproduce any or all items is granted. Editorial address is Office of Consumer Affairs, New Executive Office Building, Washington, D.C. 20506; telephone: (AC 202) 395-4692. For sale by the Superintendent of Documents, U.S. Government Printing Office, Washington, D.C. 20402; subscription \$1 a year.

